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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, October 20, 1943

Subject: "IRISH POTATOES -- VICTORY FOOD SELECTION" Information from food distribution officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Ever since Queen Marie Antionette wore potato-blossoms in her hair, to help make potatoes fashionable, the humble Murphies have shown a remarkable ability to make their way in the world on their own merits.

Right now Irish potatoes are especially popular. This fall, we've plenty of this food.....and the War Food Administration has designated Irish or white potatoes as a nationwide Victory Food Selection. Beginning tomorrow, October 21, and lasting through November 6, homemakers will make every effort to eat as much of this nutritious "bread of the people" as they can, and what they can't eat in this period they'll buy and store for use later in the winter.

We're expecting the biggest supply of white potatoes this fall and winter we've ever had. According to latest crop reports, farmers have produced a crop that's 89 million bushels larger than last year's record crop. We'll need every bushel to meet civilian and military needs...but the crop will create problems just because of its size. And so farmers, grocers, and homemakers are all planning to work together on this sixteen-day drive to take care of the crop.

Storing the crop is the worst problem. Commercial storage has been increased...but there still won't be enough to take care of all the potatoes. About 50 million bushels of potatoes must be stored outside of the producing areas...that's where you and I come in. Homemakers can help prevent waste of this important wartime food by storing a bushel or more of potatoes in their homes.

Storing potatoes at home isn't hoarding...it's simply a thrifty practice for any family with the right facilities, and it helps get the crop under cover



before bad weather comes. All you need is a cool, dark, well-ventilated place ...a cellar, closet, back porch, or garage will do. The temperature should be above freezing but not too warm...around forty degrees is best. You'll be able to store several hundred pounds of potatoes at this temperature from three to five months without spoiling. And potatoes will keep from a month to six weeks at a temperature as high as sixty degrees. That means, you could keep fifty to a hundred pounds of potatoes in your kitchen for a few weeks...if the kitchen isn't too warm. But keep them in the dark, or covered with a cloth or paper bag...potatoes stored in the light turn green and taste bitter...And your county agent can give you information on storage in backyard barrels or pits, if you have no other place.

Before you store the potatoes, whether in cellar or kitchen, inspect them carefully for decay...and take out decayed ones. Badly bruised or cracked potatoes should be stored separately and used first, because they won't keep well.

Of course, it's patriotic to eat as well as store more potatoes during harvest time...that takes the pressure off other scarcer foods, and helps the storage problem. Here's what to look for when you buy potatoes:

Best quality potatoes are smooth...sound...firm...and reasonably clean. Mealy kinds are good for baking and mashing. Waxy ones are better for salads and creaming. You can tell whether a potato is mealy or waxy by knowing the variety, or by cooking it: if it stays fairly solid it's waxy, if it falls apart it's mealy...and you'll remember the variety next time you buy. As for sizes...Jumbo sizes are best for baking; medium-sized ones are good for most other purposes.

White potatoes are full of important food values...vitamin C, for healthy bones, teeth, and gums...some thiamine, good for steady nerves...some iron. Well-known as a starchy vegetable, potatoes are a good source of energy.



They also give us some vegetable protein. And so potatoes more than pay their way in the food values they offer.

But most of the food value lies close to the skin. To get the "good" from potatoes, we homemakers should bake 'em or boil 'em in their jackets, and eat the brown skins. If they must be pared, pare thin, and pare just before they're cooked. Don't soak them or you'll lose minerals and vitamins. And use the water in which potatoes are cooked...it also contains food value.

Here's how for the perfect baked potato: Wash and dry potatoes of as nearly the same size as possible. Put into a medium-hot oven and bake until tender -- 40 to 60 minutes. For soft skin, rub a little fat on the potato before putting it in the oven. Save fuel by baking while other foods are being oven-cooked, if you like... you can cook them with any baked dish except one that needs a very slow or very hot oven. After baking, cut criss-cross gashes in the skin on one side. Then pinch the potato so that some of the soft inside part pops up through the broken skin. Drop in meat drippings, bits of crisp fried salt pork, or other table fat.

For an extra special dish, cut large baked potatoes in half, scoop out the soft part. Mash, and season with fat, hot milk, and salt. Stuff back into the potato shells, brush the top with fat, and brown in the oven.

Some cold day...try quick potato soup, with 2 cups raw potatoes...2 tablespoons fat...1 tablespoon chopped onion...1 quart milk... $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, and pepper to taste. Chop the potatoes fine, or grate them. Add potatoes, fat, and onion to milk. Cook the mixture over low heat until the potatoes are tender. By that time, the starch from the potatoes will have thickened the milk slightly. Add salt and pepper. The recipe serves six.

Fried potatoes, country style, is another old favorite. Pare enough raw potatoes to make a quart when sliced thin or chopped fine. Put in a frying pan with 2 tablespoons meat drippings or other fat. Brown a little chopped onion in the fat, if you like. Cover, and cook over medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes. When they are browned on the bottom, turn with a knife to brown the other side.

And for a change from the old stand-bys...try potato puff, or potato hot-pot, or potato pancakes. For left-overs there are hash browned potatoes, potato salad, creamed potatoes, shepherd's pie...start thinking and you'll remember many more. The Irish potato is an all-round vegetable...it's good for you, and you'll do Uncle Sam a good turn when you eat and store at home as much of this Victory Food Selection as you can.



